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## NEWS &gt; CRIME

# He says he's a 'sophisticated international fraudster,' and now he's guilty of a cyberattack on a news website

Andrew Rakhshan has been convicted in federal court in Dallas of crashing a legal news website with a cyberattack as revenge for not taking down a link about him he didn't like.



By [Kevin Krause](#)

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A Seattle man who took down a news website for writing about his past troubles has been convicted of computer crimes by a federal jury in Dallas.

[Andrew Rakhshan](#), 38, was found guilty on Thursday of knowingly causing the transmission of a command to a protected computer after a three-day trial. He'll be sentenced in June to up to 10 years in prison.

Prosecutors said he asked various news sites to take down stories and blog posts about his fraud conviction in Canada, in some cases offering money. But if they refused, he threatened to crash their website using a "[distributed denial of service attack](#)," in which multiple computers flood a targeted website's servers with traffic.

That's exactly what he did to a Washington, D.C., legal news website, [Leagle.com](#), which had servers in Dallas, according to the indictment. Leagle had linked to a court opinion about his past troubles.

Rakhshan's attorney could not immediately be reached for comment. Rakhshan was arrested last year for the 2015 attack on Leagle that overwhelmed the website.

When Leagle removed a link to the court opinion, the attack ended, the indictment says. Rakhshan, an Iranian-born U.S. citizen, initially attempted to bribe the company into removing the link, the indictment says.

"Rakhshan repeatedly attacked the victims until the victims were beaten into submission," Assistant U.S. Attorney Candina S. Heath said in a court filing.

Prosecutors say Leagle was not his only victim, which could result in a harsher sentence for him.

They say at least eight other media companies — in Canada, mostly, but also in Australia — had similar run-ins with Rakhshan over news articles they posted about his criminal past, including the [Canadian Broadcasting Corp.](#) The government says that when his demands were not met, Rakhshan also threatened to bomb their offices, and harass and murder their employees.

"The facts contained in your blog are taunting and tormenting me every day," Rakhshan wrote to one of his victims in a January 2015 email. "If you do not delete this blog, I will start disrupting your business.

"I will cause serious damage to your web server and crash your website," the email said. "If that's not enough to encourage you to delete the above blog, then I will start sending death threats to your office. I suggest that you delete the above ancient blog of yours so we can all live in peace and harmony."

## Running from the past

The defendant was born Kamyar Jahanrakhshan and came to the U.S. from Iran in 1991, according to federal court records.

He says he chose to "Americanize" his name when he obtained U.S. citizenship in 1999. Rakhshan moved to British Columbia and obtained permanent residence status in Canada, records say.

Rakhshan was convicted in Canada in 2011 of fraud and obstruction and served 18 months in prison, court records say. Rakhshan made counterfeit credit cards from foreign banks that he used to buy high-end cars and a boat, according to published reports.

He then tried to derail the investigation by calling the banks while posing as a Royal Canadian Mounted Police investigator to get them to send evidence directly to him, news reports said.

After serving his sentence, Rakhshan was deported from Canada in 2014, records show.

Back in the U.S., he started to "purge my Canadian name from the internet" and was "very successful thus far," he said in the letter filed by the government.

But when reports of his Canadian conviction appeared online, "It was like the END of the world for me -- I cried," he said in a letter the government attached to a court filing. "That would destroy any potential employment or marriage for me."

Rakhshan, a self-described "sophisticated international fraudster," emailed someone from Leagle in late 2014 and wrote that the link about his case was "capable of tarnishing his reputation," which he claimed violated his privacy.

The link contained a court opinion about a "criminal matter for which he was found guilty, though he denied his guilt," court records said.

When his offer of \$100 and a "Happy New Year" card was declined, Rakhshan sent an email to Leagle that alleged to be from "Anonymous Hackers," threatening to crash its website, which was hosted by a Dallas company, prosecutors say.

"I had no choice but to harass Leagle, as my American name must remain clean for me to have a normal life anywhere in the world," Rakhshan said in the letter.

A federal arrest warrant was issued for Rakhshan in July 2016 in Dallas for the Leagle cyberattack.

The FBI tracked him down and arrested him outside of Seattle a year later, court records show. Rakhshan was indicted in August 2017. He's been fired from his job as a Boeing Co. information technology subcontractor in Seattle and has been in custody since his arrest, court records show.



[Kevin Krause](#). Kevin has worked for The Dallas Morning News since 2003, and he has covered federal criminal courts for the past six years. Kevin has been a journalist for 26 years. Kevin is a multiple recipient of the Stephen Philbin Award for excellence in legal reporting. Kevin earned a BA from Boston University.

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